

An Analysis of Intergroup Relations, Identities, Conflict Dialogue and Diversity Narratives on Digital Platforms from the Past Decade

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This paper examines how contested pasts are mobilized to negotiate power and identity in contemporary digital publics, using the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a case of “imagefare” (image warfare) preceding the 7 October 2023 Gaza war. Focusing on Vice News’ YouTube coverage (2014-2023), the study asks: What themes regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict highlight polarizing responses in public video-commentary on the Vice News channel? Methodologically, the research applies an inductive qualitative content analysis, with themes used as the reporting categories, to a manually curated corpus of 10,000 highly visible comments (top 33 comment threads per video) drawn from a random sample of 20 videos within a 37-video Vice-curated playlist. This design leverages platform-ranked “top” threads to capture discourse most likely to shape audience interpretation and community norms. The findings are reported thematically through seven identified recurrent themes, four of which concentrate on polarization: (1) empathy and affective positioning; (2) rights to existence and the ethics of violence; (3) historical, religious, and politico-cultural interpretations; and (4) settlements as a locus of legality, dispossession, and moral argumentation. Across these themes, commenters repeatedly re-litigate historical narratives (e.g., origins, legitimacy, inheritance, displacement) to authorize present-day claims, reproduce in-/out-group boundaries, and frame asymmetries of power through “victim/defensive” logics. Notably, the comment space includes both international spectators and self-identified stakeholders, suggesting that digital arenas function as an extension of conflict—where memory claims, identity resilience, and legitimacy contests are performed, amplified, and contested in real time.

Keywords: imagefare, online polarization, social identity, collective memory, conflict news, qualitative content analysis, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, YouTube comments

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Imagefare¹. The image war and polarization in YouTube commentary on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 2014-2023.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the world's longest-running and most controversial conflicts. At its heart, it is a conflict between two self-determination movements—the Jewish Zionist project and the Palestinian nationalist project—that lay claim to the same territory. But it is so much more complicated than that, with seemingly every fact and historical detail small and large litigated by the two sides and their defenders (Beauchamp, 2018).

This paper attempts to explore a discussion of the results of a content analysis of the online public response to Vice Media's portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (for a quick one-pager historical review of the conflict itself see Annex 1).

In the last 20 years, the role of media in the conflict's projection across the new mediums of information (such as social media, facilitated by the growth of the internet in the process of globalization) has introduced these conflict realities, grievances, and cyclical clashes into the collective mindset of a new global generation exposed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as consumers of news, entertainment and participatory engagement, through political boycotts, defunding campaigns, but also support, lobby and advocacy activities; and one of such media outlets that has had a prominent role in the last decade is Vice News Media, who has made a name for itself and built a brand-recognition based reporting on conflicts around the world, the Israeli-Palestinian one having had a prominent role in this process.

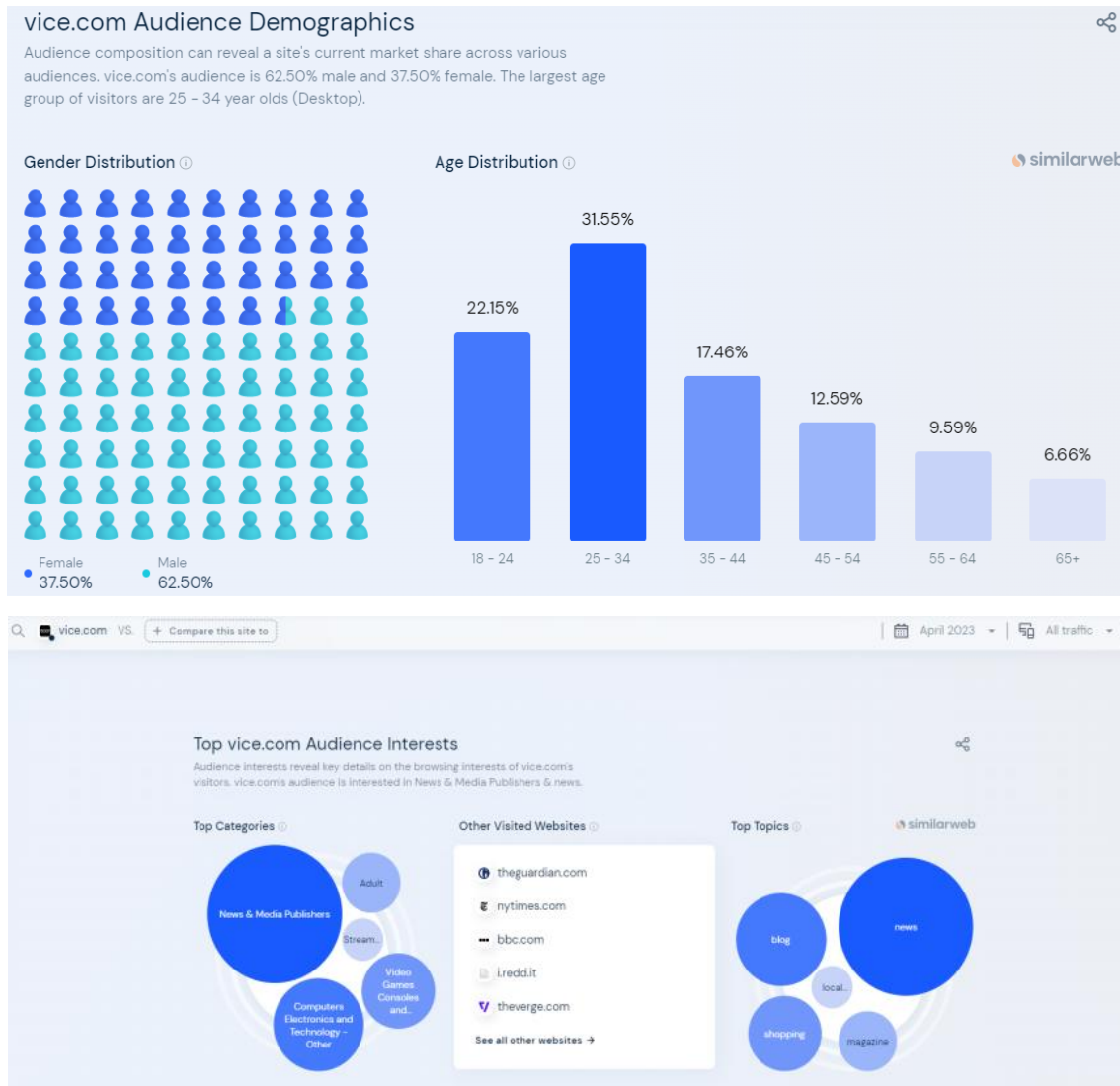
VICE News is an international news organization created by and for a connected generation. Bringing you an unvarnished look at some of the most important events of our time, and shining a light on underreported stories around the globe. We get to the heart of the matter with reporters who call it like they see it. (Vice News, 2023)

Vice News is part of Vice Media, an American-Canadian digital media and broadcasting company together with Vice Studios, Vice TV, and Vice.com.

Recently, Vice Media went through a bankruptcy call (Darcy, 2023), which prompted our inquiry into how exactly did this outlet represent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict throughout the past decade, considering its global reach was quite considerable, especially with the younger generation. "Vice's website, TV channel,

¹ Term initially introduced in Ayalon, Popovich, & Yarchi (2016).

social channels and podcasts enlighten, entertain, and empower young people across the globe” (Vice Media Group, 2023).



Therefore we considered the following research question:

What are the themes regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict highlighting polarizing² responses that appear on Vice News (YouTube) channel as reflected in public video response comments?

With 3 billion individual views and almost 9 million subscribers on YouTube alone, Vice News (one of many Vice Media administered YouTube channels) caters to a diverse global audience. However as a mainly digital outlet focused heavily on the online audiences, the younger generations that engage with online content, who are generally well informed, care about social issues and manifest active voices in the social domains are mainly targeted. For our purposes, we focus directly on these actors through their online response commentary

² Pernicious polarization—the division of society into two mutually antagonistic political camps (McCoy, Press, Somer, & Tuncel, 2022)—is slightly simpler conceptually than Sunstein's (1999) and Iyengar & Westwood's (2015), with the specific and distinct differentiation between affective and political polarization.

to the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and socially-charged events related to it as reported on by Vice throughout the last decade.

Theoretical Aspects Considered for Online Context

The Role News (Journalists and Media) Plays in Conflict Coverage and Its Polarizing Response

Christensen and Khalil (2023) told us that journalists act as gatekeepers of verified and vetted information and that credibility and protection of readers and viewers from misinformation and propaganda is a main journalistic precept. New media, such as social media, has however seen many comments about legitimacy of content, propaganda, one-sidedness, with trust-building processes between content creators/journalists and sources shifting across platforms according to the digital technologies communicative affordances. When specifically considering conflict, journalists tend to value it highly in their reporting (Eilders, 2006). News audiences, alternatively, may be predisposed to engage because of affective reactions to such content (Mutz, 2015), a predisposition potentially amplified when partisan group identity is involved (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015).

Gatekeeping theory and research on news values have been extended into the domain of analyzing how audiences select news content. Eilders (2006), for instance, summarized that conflict and controversy guide audience news selections. Scholars have drawn from news values theory to investigate further beyond audience news selection to actual engagement and active participation by leaving and replying to news comments about conflicts (Weber, 2014; Ziegele, Breiner, & Quiring, 2014). Therefore, as Baden and Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2018a) explained, as media definitely orients itself to focus more on violence, sidelining concerns of reconciliation and disengagement as time proceeds, ethnocentric bias and self-reinforcing media hypes, become linked to escalation and radicalization; this means news outlets such as Vice begin highlighting more specific aspects (notably, violence and suffering above negotiations and peaceful solutions), and focus on in- and out-groups, with different kinds of evaluation. This tendency to cover and comment conflict in an event-oriented, violence-focused and ethnocentric manner, is prevalent both during routine periods and during major escalations.

Frames (Making Narratives Fit in Conflict Coverage)

Therefore, Baden and Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2018b)³, explained further that frames presented by selected sources play a critical role. This sees transformation and fitting of available material within journalistic news frames (selected frames to present specific, subjective viewpoints; multiple source frames as testimonies about newsworthy events; interpret communicative actions in sources' struggle for recognition in the public arena). One good example of this is how covering deaths in conflicts leads to the construction of ethnocentric news. Wolfsfeld, Frosh, and Awabdy (2008) highlighted two prominently used frames: 'Victims Mode' ('used when citizens have suffered an especially tragic loss of life') and 'Defensive Mode' (when own 'forces have carried

³ In a companion study that traced how Israeli, Palestinian, American, British and German newspapers each handled the same set of prominent source statements during the killings of four teenagers—three Israelis, one Palestinian—in the summer of 2014, immediately before the Gaza war that opens our own sampling window. They distinguish three repositioning strategies, each yielding a different class of news frame: a source may be carried as one subjective standpoint among several, treated as evidence of what occurred, or read as a move in a public contest over recognition. The distinction is directly useful here, because commenters perform the same three operations on the material Vice News places before them, quoting a claim as opinion, as fact, or as a manoeuvre by the other side.

out an attack that has inflicted a similar loss on the enemy’). These frames in the media⁴ parallel psychological reactions found in individuals and ensure routine steady flows of culturally acceptable news stories that reinforce hatred between enemies.

Making the News, and Why? Responses, Topics and Facilitations in the Digital Age. Social Media in the Context of Conflict Research

One notable aspect when considering the role of media in violent conflicts in the digital age, is facilitating confrontations in asymmetrical conflicts (such as the Israeli-Palestinian one) with the ability of the weaker challengers to compete politically with their more powerful antagonists (piggy-back also on the spread of camera phones and the inability of the authorities to keep secrets help explain this); it also facilitates a tremendous boon for spreading hatred and intolerance (as opposed to peace and reconciliation) (Wolfsfeld, 2018). One good place to analyze such engagements is news comments sections, where online discussion and the nature of the coverage highlights how news users and journalists engage with comments whilst considering the presence of partisan terms, and the prompting or tacit acceptance of polarized attitudes (Muddiman & Stroud, 2017).

In one of their earlier works, Stroud, Muddiman, and Scacco (2017) showed that a cognitive bias towards negativity may encourage news users to actively engage and pay more attention to negative news than to positive news. Not only does negative content spark attention, it also can motivate action. Emotional, and particularly emotionally aversive content can prompt political participation. Indignation towards news media content in particular increases the likelihood of engaging in discursive participation related to politics through partisan comments. Social identity theory suggests that people will respond as members of groups when their group membership is made salient. Partisanship has become an increasingly salient social identity that can affect how people behave towards those with different partisan affiliations and partisan cues can trigger animosity towards the out-group. It influences behavior in comment sections as well; people are more likely to endorse (e.g., “Like”) comments that express their political viewpoint than comments articulating a divergent point of view, engaging and promoting the “virality” of a specific item, and therefore its increased visibility. Supportive evidence comes from the finding that political news, where partisanship features prominently, is the most common type of news story on which people leave comments in the United States. Partisan words predict reactions consistently showing that partisanship is an increasingly salient social identity and that it affects how people react to comments.

Taking Sides from Afar/Online: Social Media’s Role as an Extension of the Battlefield

The concept at issue is what Ayalon, Popovich, and Yarchi (2016) termed imagefare: the use of images as a guiding principle in conflict, or as a substitute for conventional military means, in pursuit of political objectives. Their argument is that where the disparity between belligerents is wide and foreign coverage is heavy, the decisive arena shifts into what they call the information space—a domain whose boundaries extend wherever people can receive information about the conflict. It is that shift which makes an audience’s commentary a conflict site rather than a reaction to one. So we see that people are not just observing or consuming news anymore, but actually taking sides and participating in the conflict by manifesting in- and out-group responses (thorough polarizing commentary). Yarchi and Ayalon (2023) in their recent work

⁴ The authors read each as the newsroom analogue of a defence mechanism observable at the individual level, which helps explain why such stories circulate so readily: they arrive already congruent with what their audience is disposed to feel.

“Fighting over the Image” focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reflected on the image war projection (with Hamas and the IDF in focus) and the battle over the image and narrative as a sophisticated choice of fighting areas in conflict. They showed how it favors the weaker side and how it involves the public itself as a key participant. Their work proved that waves of violence are used as a platform to advance and reinforce narratives for a wider (world online) audience. Clashes are strategically chosen in an asymmetric conflict (therefore also “information space conflict”) to carefully cater and curate an image aimed at garnering support while the world is watching; waging conflict is a performance “raising a sense of compassion towards the actors and their struggle” from the international community; leading to the empowerment of non-state actors (reduction in power of state actors, while non-state actors are becoming powerful).

The power and impact of images and the political actor’s ability to promote their narrative online in today’s Information Age (facilitated by globalization, technological developments and focus on issues of transparency on social media) extends the impact of the conflict beyond the military front, the homefront and the international front with impact on both the political and legal components.

Legitimate participation of wider outside communities through publicly expressing their opposition [aka “sphere of legitimate controversy” (Hallin, 1989)], shows how an empowered general public contributes to altering the flow of information around the world about conflict and the actors involved, limiting the ability of states to control information, and empowering non-state actors to “online virality process”—people exposed to news stories search the web, find online content that increases their exposure contributing to the organization’s ability to promote its ideology on the image front (Yarchi & Ayalon, 2023). Public news consumers therefore actually participate in the conflict online, taking sides, influencing the way we perceive different political actors involved in the conflict; and through their response such as comments to visual images (making complicated situations seem simplistic and easy to interpret) thus influence the audience’s perceptions as shortcuts to understanding the conflict, which places them at the center of the competition for the hearts and minds of the public around the world engaging with the conflict-related content and beyond.

Methodological Design

Our research seeks to contribute to the previously quoted literature by examining the response commentary in a recognizable media outlet prominent on a popular digital platform space (YouTube as social media facilitating participation of the younger demographics in the news coverage) with global free digital market access (thus enhancing the opinion analysis breadth), centering on an intractable / ongoing asymmetric conflict as a prominent news story (thus enhancing its depth of focus) highlighting thematic sensitivities relevant for generating polarizing responses from the international audience with regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

These comments will be analyzed considering for stance-taking indicating in- and out-group themes (for or against, right or wrong, justified or condemned etc.). Analyzing comments to posted videos is one way to study the engagement from the wider international public/audience with the conflict news content, and alignment with one side of the conflict, or the other (thus observing potential in- and out-group / polarizing thinking patterns / partisan themes as they are manifested).

This research attempts to provide additional insights towards the global perception of said conflict and perhaps even highlight links towards its potential resolution. This can open the avenue to new research and potentially contribute to standing research on how social media facilitates not only information and entertainment but active participation in an ongoing conflict through stance-taking, criticism and polarizing

attitudes, but also perspective-taking, empathy and resolution-orientated promulgations (open declarations and calls for resolving the conflict).

Population and Corpus

Defining the corpus: Within the framework of this study, we are examining the commentary response on a series of public videos available online on the Vice News YouTube channel (younger demographics with over 80% viewership being under 40s) regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Because there are more than 100 public videos referring to the Israel and Palestine conflict (each with hundreds of thousands or millions of views and thousands to tens of thousands of comments) on the Vice News Youtube channel, analyzing the entire population would be impractical.

Sampling and Data Collection Choices

Sampling criterion: There is a playlist of 37 publically available videos titled “The Israeli-Palestinian conflict” dating to the 2014 Gaza war (and when the YouTube channel was established). This allows for a good selection of videos specifically concerning our research focus, with plenty of public online exposure (between 200k and 2 million views each), more objectively classified as linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by Vice News journalists (as opposed to ourselves making the subjective biased selection of videos). This gives us an adequate sampling period (the entire library range of videos classified by Vice News YouTube channel as pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) of the last 9 years; sampled and analyzed between the 23rd of May and 5th of June, then we applied (for manual qualitative analysis) a random sampling to get a total sample size of (~half of total) 20 videos. The sampling units comprise of focusing on the top 33 threads (comments and their subsequent replies) of each of the 20 selected videos giving us at least 10,000 top-rated comments (these are comments which are up-scaled usually by engagement, and their replies and likes in accordance with the YouTube algorithm). Based on Central Limit Theorem, this builds confidence in our data considering the manual processing was done well (difference between 10,000 and 100,000 comments thus is not much).

The textual corpus (YouTube comments, top 33 threads, upvoted, replied to based on algorithm) has been standardized from initial multimodal (which including text, emojis and links/urls) to just simplified text. Units of text were processed in context, with regards to samples (that matter) and context units respectively (in relation to videos reacting to, threads, references and replies). Specific for coding and context, it was difficult to automate corpus creation due to missing parts of the text if longer (“read more” interactive component of replies pressed to view prevents data collection through automated comments webscraping by crawlers) therefore it all had to be collected and processed manually. For a quick overview of statistical inference towards the entirety of the corpus as well as systemic biases (challenges/needs), limitations, as well as further research and considerations pertaining to the methodological choices see Annex 2.

Finally we performed a qualitative manual analysis (content analysis) with an inductive explorative character aimed at identifying certain attributes of the text content, in this case themes used as the reporting categories. The findings are reported thematically through seven content categories, four of which are interpreted as central to polarizing responses.

Results

Overall, 7 themes have been identified, the first 4 of which fall within the conceptualization of polarization as we initially accepted its operationalization:

1. Empathy, Emotional Perspectives on the Conflict and Complexity of Support;
2. The Right to Exist and the Ethics of Conflict;
3. Historical Context, Religious Perspectives, Politico-Cultural Interpretations and Comparisons;
4. Settlements;
5. Media Bias, Social Media and News Sources;
6. Calls for Peace, Justice and Solutions;
7. Miscellaneous Topics.

See below descriptive summary of each of the identified themes:

1. **Empathy, Emotional Perspectives on the Conflict and Complexity of Support:** Many comments express empathy for innocent individuals affected by the conflict and offer encouragement to stay strong and continue the fight for their rights. This theme emphasizes solidarity, understanding and compassion for those affected by the conflict and show understanding towards the Palestinian cause and a belief in the power of unity. Comments express emotional support, admiration, and blessings for Israel as a nation also. However, contrasting views criticize Israel's actions, question its policies, and suggest its potential downfall. Comments acknowledge the complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, highlighting blame on both sides. Challenges faced by individuals, the need for change in living conditions and employment, and difficulties in achieving a peaceful resolution are mentioned.
2. **The Right to Exist and the Ethics of Conflict:** The comments reflect a range of perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including discussions about the right exist, the right to defend oneself, power imbalances, and the manipulation of civilian deaths for political gain. Commenters have varying levels of recognition and understanding of Israel and Palestine. Some question the significance of the term "Palestine," while others assert the existence and historical connection of both entities. Arguments and counterarguments about civilian casualties and the difficulty of distinguishing militants from civilians are discussed. IDF killings, debates about targeting civilians, and discussions about the use of human shields are mentioned. Debates about the actions of both Israel and Palestinians are present. Some argue that Israel is justified in firing missiles due to terrorists hiding among civilians, while others contend that militants provoke and uses human shields by launching attacks from populated areas. Discussions revolve also around the use of violence, its ethics and its justifications. Some condemn violence and emphasize the need for peaceful solutions, while others question the actions of both sides and the lack of justifications for certain acts. Discussions revolve around Hamas as an oppressive enemy and terrorists, as well as debates about labeling Israel as a terrorist state, and opinions on the actions and influence of Hamas in and beyond Gaza. Some emphasize the need for denouncing terrorism, while others raise concerns about human rights violations and the targeting of collaborators. Differing opinions exist on spying and treason. Some advocate for the death penalty for treason, while others stress due process and the abolition of the death penalty as in many Western countries. Commenters express concerns about personal safety, potential repercussions of collaboration or criticism, and the privacy of individuals featured in videos.
3. **Historical Context, Religious Perspectives, Politico-Cultural Interpretations and Comparisons:** Comments touch on the historical context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the funding of Israel by the US and the lack of aid reaching Gaza. Comments refer to historical events, such as the establishment of Israel and the conflict's timeline, providing different interpretations and perspectives. Ancient history, religious beliefs, and political precursor events are referenced to explain the conflict's origins. Some commenters draw comparisons to historical events, such as the colonization of America, to highlight perceived similarities or differences. The impact of neighboring countries' actions, international double standards, and power dynamics are also mentioned. Religious and cultural factors are heavily interspersed and seen as fuel to the conflict, with references to Allah's help, Jewish heritage and God's promise of the land.
4. **Settlements:** Some express support for settlements, considering them a part of Israel's territory or homeland. They argue for the need for more housing and assert Israel's right to exist. Some strongly criticize settlements, viewing them as illegal, morally wrong, and a form of land theft. They argue that settlements hinder the feasibility of a two-state solution and contribute to worsening living conditions for Palestinians. Concerns about the impact of settlements on Palestinians are raised, including forced displacement, isolation of Palestinian communities, and human rights violations. Some express frustration with the tone and lack of acknowledgment regarding the suffering and experiences of Palestinians. They critique the debate surrounding settlements and express dissatisfaction with perceived injustices. Ongoing demolitions and the lack of proof required for land ownership claims are discussed. The legality of settlements under international law is also debated, with some arguing that settlements are illegal and Israel disregards international law. Others question the existence of enforceable legal punishment and highlight the distinction between personal morality and universal legality.
5. **Media Bias, Social Media and News Sources:** Several comments criticize media bias and question the neutrality of news sources such as VICE News, The Guardian, and the BBC. Examples of biased reporting, polarization of news, and comparisons between local and international media are discussed. Many commenters criticize VICE News for perceived bias in their coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They express a desire for raw and unfiltered news without slant. Several commenters express appreciation for Vice News' reporting on the conflict, commending them for showing facts that they believe Western media often fails to cover. Criticism of Social Media and Propaganda is present throughout. Some comments criticize the role of social media in radicalizing individuals and spreading propaganda. Suggestions include increased monitoring of social media platforms and critical analysis of information to counter extremist views. Responsibility of Governments and Institutions also highlighted. Comments touch upon the responsibility of governments and institutions in addressing the conflict and ensuring peace and security with the role of social media platforms being debated, with some arguing for government regulation and determining censorship standards. The role and the importance of parental guidance and education in preventing radicalization is highlighted. Suggestions include monitoring children's activities, providing opportunities for constructive engagement, and integrating youth into society for a better future.
6. **Calls for Peace, Justice and Solutions:** Some commenters express a desire for peace and lasting solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Discussions touch on denouncing terrorism, commitments from both Israeli and Palestinian leaders, and the obstacles faced in achieving a solution. Many express support for a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, advocating for separate states for Israelis and Palestinians and emphasizing the need to respect international consensus. The role of diplomacy and negotiations in resolving the conflict is also emphasized. Some argue for negotiations and making deals, while others express skepticism about the willingness of parties to reach a resolution. A desire for peace, justice, and an end to the cycle of violence is expressed throughout as well as the importance of love and transcending hatred based on race or religion.
7. **Miscellaneous Topics:** Other unrelated topics mentioned include foreign aid, poverty in Gaza, Iran's support of terrorism, the COVID-19 response, opinions on foreign leadership, discussions touching on human rights, LGBTQ+ rights, the treatment of collaborators, the effectiveness or intelligence of resistance methods, the accuracy of attacks, with contrasting views on these topics.

As only the first four are relevant to our analysis, we will focus on them further. For some additional insights (quotes pertaining to the other themes not further considered, see Annex 3).

The first theme was Empathy, Emotional Perspectives on the Conflict and Complexity of Support and focused on emphasizing solidarity, compassion for those affected by the conflict and understanding towards their cause, as well as blaming, criticizing and suggesting the downfall of the conflicting sides, whilst acknowledging the complexities of the conflict. This was one of the most, if not the most, prevalent themes encountered.

Two examples that could illustrate some of the notions harbored by this theme are shown below:

1. [RG>KW] The Palestinians start a fight with the Israelis, the Israelis retaliate in defense, the Palestinians then use the retaliation as propaganda to make themselves look like the victim.

2. [M.J.] They should blame Hamas for starting war that lead to their families dying, coz Israel will defend itself when you shoot rockets at them. We are used to terrorists attacking Israel then play victim too. And I'm sure Israel is used to defending itself when attacked by terrorists too. Arabs (Palestinians) are crying now coz people they tried to victimize since 1948 refuse to be their victims. Israel will continue to defend itself when it is attacked by terrorists just like it did since day one when it was re-established, and there is nothing you will do about it.

Further examples for this theme can be seen in Annex 4.

The second theme identified in our content analysis was about The Right to Exist and the Ethics of Conflict which focused on the perceived right to exist as a country, recognition as a people, concerning the right to defend oneself, as well as power imbalances, manipulation of civilian deaths for political gain, use of violence, its ethics and justifications.

Three examples that could illustrate some of the notions harbored by this theme are shown below:

1. [BT] For it to be a war it has to meet the condition that the other side can fight back. Palestinians are not fighting back and when they do they're called terrorist. This is a genocide happening in the modern day. [DI >] and now Israel is claiming to be the victim.

2. [CU] "Does the world expect us to be well behaved victims?" This really was powerful. [S] Somebody stole my house. Then expect me to sit silently and be a well behaved neighbour. [>>M.P.] Now we know who terrorists are, misbehaving victims.

3. [A] They are not victims, they are aggressors. Palestinians are playing a smart game of making themselves look weak. While they keep fighting and claim to be strong. Yeah, rockets and intifadas are not slaps, my friend. Find another homeland.

Further examples for this theme can be seen in Annex 5.

The third theme identified in our content analysis was about Historical Context, Religious Perspectives, Politico-Cultural Interpretations and Comparisons referring to historical events (such as the establishment of Israel) and the conflict's timeline, with beliefs, politically origins and religious and cultural factors (fueling the conflict, like Jewish heritage and God's promise of the land).

A couple of examples that could illustrate some of the notions harbored by this theme are shown below:

1. [SF>TK] Your measure of what's right and wrong is subjective and based on the fickle opinions of others who've influenced you to think this way. God placed Israel in the land and He will sustain them. It doesn't matter what the opinion of the entire world is. If you stand against God's will for the Jewish people in the land, you're making a huge mistake no matter how many people or organizations think the same. The Bible says Jerusalem will be a 'heavy stone' and the entire world will gather against it. Best read to the end for the final outcome. "It will come about on that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will injure themselves severely". [DL>C] Israel existed 1,500 years before Muhammad and Islam were born.

2. [O.P.>D.L.] Not majority, there is around 5 million Palestinian immigrants within Jordan since 1948, my grandpa was born in historic Palestine (currently occupied) in 1909 and died in 2012 also within occupied land (same place he was born), we have many family members in Jordan/Lebanon (due to immigration because of occupation), we even have a family tree that dates back generations to Palestine. We even have photos of Jewish immigrants that my grandpa welcomed into his home in early 1930's, so don't even try with me.

3. [RG>KW] Christians pray with rosary beads, Muslims pray with Molotov cocktails. Got it. It has everything to do with the left/right dichotomy. Leftist will say Israel is the oppressor of innocent Palestinians. The right will say the Palestinians should not get away with not paying rent and bombing Israelis.

Further examples for this theme can be seen in Annex 6.

The fourth and final theme identified in our content analysis was about Settlements referring to support or condemnation about them, considerations of legality, morality, hindrance by them of the feasibility of a two state solution, forced displacement, isolation of communities, land rights and more.

A couple of examples that could illustrate some of the notions harbored by this theme are shown below:

1. [KW>RG] It's a comparison about how you were talking about them fighting back and then deserving it. The slaves fought back, but does them fighting back make them less of a victim? Excuse me did the Israelis not come after the war and after everyone didn't have space for them? The Israelis started increasing their settlements in areas which did not belong to them. They wanna expand and take over, so what's the point of a two state solution?

2. [S1>PL] This is such an old and a broken record, the Palestinian government signed the Oslo Accords and recognised Israel decades ago but Israel still hasn't left the west bank and are still building settlements and still hasn't left the occupation.

3. [NC>KW] Displacement, you mean the people squatting on land?

4. [BG>FM] There is no real disagreement that the property in question was legally purchased by the Jewish community in 1875 and was registered as such in the Ottoman land registry.

Further examples for this theme can be seen in Annex 7.

Discussion, Contribution and Conclusion

By manually coding and analyzing this large corpus of data, one noticed the increasing partisanship present in online commentary with regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Numerous themes were observed and upon alignment and topical integration, the most prominent ones alongside polarization were presented. In alignment with relevant literature we indeed observed in our data a higher active engagement with negative news and comments (corresponding to a cognitive bias towards negativity), fervent (animosity triggers towards the out-group) political expressions of viewpoints and partisan words used prominently (such as left vs. right, right vs. wrong, moral vs. immoral, alignment with other ideological models like apartheid etc.). This consolidates our findings in the scope of our insight from Stroud et al. (2017). Moreover, we observed a high-salience of thematic sensitivities focusing on favoring the Palestinian side as pertaining its engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, notably alongside its "victim mode" being victimized by a technically stronger opponent, Israel, also polemicized in dichotomous notions of operating in "defensive mode" (Wolfsfeld et al., 2008); with registered losses marked empathically/emotionally but also ethically justified in a wider construct of resistance, self-determination and rightful inheritance, religious frames and overall dominance.

Most interestingly, one noted a curious phenomenon where not only outsiders (international audience commentary), but conflict-relevant parties (self-proclaimed Jewish Israelis, and Palestinians from the territories and abroad) actively engaging in dialectic commentary in a digital space, contributing to the notion that "the image war projection" is another dimension of fighting and where the digital "battlespace" is also to be used as a choice in continuing the conflict online. This was indeed confirmed to be the case, as it was that this engagement most often "favors the weaker side" (Yarchi & Ayalon, 2023). Palestinians received also more

praise, empathy, sense of humanization of suffering, but this was also due to a clear delineation between responsible parties engaging in actual conflict and civilian casualties. This is not to discount that support for Israel, its rights to defense, existence, engagement and understanding of its need for responding to armed provocation was also present. Condemnation and justification was thus noted somewhat unequally.

This study adds to previous literature by examining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the context of social-media engagement and analyzing polarization thematically. This provides insights into multiple notions such as media frames, covering deaths in conflict and ethnocentric news, alignment with psychological reactions studies in individuals, as well as cultural reinforcement interpretations and recognitions in the public arena (online medium), audience controversy, content values around event-orientation and violence-focused escalations; and last but not least also role of media (journalists and outlets) and propaganda perception in conflict scenarios. Most importantly, this study engages with the conflict beyond literature, studying human response alongside considerations of where the highest perceived areas of focus could be in addressing the conflict thematically, potentially towards limiting escalatory tendencies (on- and off-line): Bridging narratives around politico-cultural-religious notions, observing structural calls for peaceful solutions, reducing tensions and drawing closer on the basis of shared interests.

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Annex 1

First, a quick historical review gives us an insight into how this conflict has budded from the early days of the 1880s Zionist-Arab conflict (Morris, 1999), when the first planks into the construction of the modern national consciousness and identity (Khalidi, 1997) where being nailed down, causing the first clashes in the story for the struggle for statehood (Khalidi, 2006) of the now Israelis and Palestinians, the then early Yishuv communities and the Ottoman Arab subjects in the territory of Palestine. Past the early Jewish immigration waves and the first territorial purchases attempts, history tells us that this conflict blossomed and morphed into a post-colonial emancipation period, when national institutions started fomenting during the British Mandate period (Anderson, 2019), with various territorial sharing schemes/partitions being put forth (Aly, Feldman, & Shikaki, 2013; Dubnov & Robson, 2019) which weren't agreed upon, to the full ethnic and military conflict which is remembered by the Israelis as the War of Independence (Segev, 1986; Bar-On, 2006; Shavit, 2013; Sela & Kadish, 2016), and by the Palestinians as the Nakba, a.k.a. "The Catastrophe" (Sa'di, 2002; Khalidi, 2007; Manna, 2022).

This 1948 event marked the shaping of a period of power asymmetry to follow, which saw the Israelis gain territory and control also over areas previously controlled and inhabited by Palestinians, who, if they were not transferred, evacuated, perished or fled, in the occupied areas were subject to martial law for the upcoming two decades also giving rise to the refugee problem (Morris, 1997) and the calls for the right of return (Karsh, 2001). A culmination of civil and international pressures manifested themselves into another war in 1967, between Israel and its surrounding Arab neighbors which saw the former solidify its grasp and state in the region with a clear and decisive victory (Aly et al., 2013) and further territorial gains, which were subsequently

leveraged for political stability and peace treaties later on (Morris, 1999). Centered on national struggle, the concept of self-determination spurred Arafat's PLO on the political scene (Steinberg, 1987). With the rise of terrorism and subsequent further military interventions in adjacent areas such as Lebanon in 1982, which could be seen as the end of the conventional wars, "old wars" era in Israel's engagements, and the beginning of a new pattern of cyclical conflict emerging, one that is still noted as ongoing today (Benziman, 2017) and the intro to what has been termed as the "new wars" era.

However in the historical background, politically, we saw right after, the Oslo Accords took place in the '90s (Khalidi, 2006; Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003) and their subsequent failure (Rekhes, 2002) starting to shape the dilemmas we still see today as maintaining the conflict, such as issues of authority and territorial control (Klein, 1997), the refugee problem and compensation (Brynen & El-Rifai, 2013), East Jerusalem and settlements (Newman, 2005), the Islamization of the conflict with the prominence of Hamas (Litvak, 1998; Klein, 2007; Shikaki, 2007; Brenner, 2017), and the emergence of the Israeli Right (Oz, 1971; Sprinzak, 1989). Conflict wise, the two intifadas also took place (Khalidi, 2006) and we see the Palestinian citizens of Israel's challenges with the state (Jamal, 2004; Dowty, 2005) and polarization continues.

Annex 2

Statistical inference towards the entirety—37 videos included in the "Israeli-Palestinian conflict playlist" also are exactly 20% of the 147 videos on the Vice News channel related to Israel and Palestine [that appear when key searching Israel (and) Palestine]. This is useful to be used as targeted training data set if we (or other researchers) will ever consider extending the scope to quantitative methods (such as supervised machine learning/unsupervised topic modeling). We crafted a codebook for a manual content analysis, whilst specifying rules to extract text features and built the data categorizing phrases, analyzing metaphors and expressions, ascertaining associations and connotations, considering socio-political, religious and cultural interpretations of the text in context (Krippendorff, 2004); we explicated the context that guided the (abductive⁵) inferences (e.g., quoting from religious text would be coded as religious perspectives, but due to political Islam components it could vary, like not making deals with enemies would be more political than religious; inferring the religious affiliations from metaphors used; inferring the political affiliations based on comparisons made; someone identifying themselves as Palestinians or Jews when making a comment, etc.).

Systemic biases (challenges/needs):

- Time considerations—somewhat longitudinal as videos cover 9-year period, comments timestamps also (mixed, which doesn't really allow for Temporal Sampling / opinion snapshots in time so to say, so changes therefore not considered).
- Playlist selection: By selecting a pre-set playlist (made by Vice News itself) we avoid our own subjective bias in sampling, but we incur a selection bias from the outlet (interested in views and engagement), which guides our construction of the text collections based on this available data (also VPN influences which videos are available from the total list, 3-4 become not publicly available in some countries). Considering content moderation we must say we chose this option as we find it better than Random Sampling as an overall video corpus selection based on keyword searches would provide for instance (from the larger overall video list). To mitigate, Random Sampling within the playlist has been applied.
- Context knowledge: references to the videos themselves, to co-text (context references from within and outside the thread-replies) in handling ambiguity around conflict response, and prior knowledge used (minimally) when interpreting data; but overall doesn't vary much amongst the videos comments.

⁵ Abductive inferences proceed across logically distinct domains, from particulars of one kind to particulars of another kind (These are the kinds of inferences of interest to content analysis, where they proceed from texts to the answers to the analyst's questions). Of course, one can make such inferences only with a certain probability, but the probability may be strengthened if one is able to take other variables (contributing conditions) into account. Deductive and inductive inferences are not central to content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004, ch. 2).

- Theoretical explanations indicate that those responding / commenting are biased which means that analyzing their public responses to the conflict (which is a contentious topic of course) might not be a representative “wider public” sample (as they might be on the extreme side of views or promoting certain agendas with interest to dominate discussions online).

- Data collection: comments scraping (crawlers would be very useful but not optimal unfortunately, due to the limitation of format and interactive nature of the platform of choice—click to see reply, read more, etc.). So webscraping is very limited therefore forcing serious manual (pre-processing/prep) work even with python, octoparse or facepager.

- Manual data preprocessing is very energy intensive due to the unstructured characteristics of social media comments (dealing with the noisy data—cleaning and normalizing it, ensuring consistency), and the volume and scale of it. We’ve spent days (even weeks) doing some very monotonous work on it.

- Focusing on themes identification means digging into understanding the public’s perception; any opinions/sentiment analysis and categorization involving issues with language use (translation nuances), sarcasm, context, cross-cultural issues (like comparisons with left-right dichotomies for instance in the US) etc. spans complex, multifaceted and sensitive topics (politics, religion, history, culture, human rights, etc.).

- Ethics—privacy, anonymization of public content was performed; we also avoided misrepresentations as much as possible.
- Inter-coder reliability is “lacking” as one author did it alone.

Some limitations:

- The scope of the analysis: despite the sample size being considerable, and the focus of the study being conflict oriented, the methodological choices of one broadcasting service (Vice News), covering only one conflict (Israeli-Palestinian) on only one online platform (YouTube), and using one playlist of journalists’ pre-selected videos mark a skewing focus towards peak escalatory moments. This has been considered, and the longitudinal nature of the videos chosen from a 9-year range should limit this somewhat. However, the data are notably tainted due to the higher incidence of conflicts with Hamas during multiple wars in this time period post-2014.

- The scale of the thematic findings did not allow for in-depth exploratory considerations of less conflict relevant polarized notions, such as human rights considerations, criticism of media bias, role of diplomacy and negotiations in resolving the conflict, etc.

- The comments analyzed were not fully contextualized. Only to thread tree, not wider responses outside of threads (before and after for instance, links inserted in comments not verified, video references and timestamps not accounted for etc.).

Further research:

- Extend study to other similar younger demographics centered media outlets.
- Extend study to other intractable conflicts with similar decade long media coverage.
- Center response analysis on relevant conflict stakeholders (not just wider public, but fully focused on only those identifying as belonging to groups participating and engaging in live conflict). That way we can more closely analyze the notions of imagefare (image warfare in the social domain).

- Have more than one coder to test reliability and validity beyond qualitative analysis for potential publishing purposes.

In order to increase confidence in the reliability of our data, the following can be considered for future research/publishing purposes:

- With the definitions that we ended up at termination of this manual coding, we’re confident if we apply these definitions to all the material again, we would come up with the same justification/conclusions. The next step would be to have testing for inter-coder reliability done (because at this point only one author coded, set up the structure and developed the construct, either new coders can approach the data to replicate the research or quantitative means can be considered).

- We identified no distortion of data throughout the analysis. We made use only of public available information. No conflict of interest or manipulation of or by sources was noted. The content is highly context sensitive (meaningful, informative and

representational). Moreover we observed (stable) themes that don't seem to evolve over time (at least the 9 years looked at so far) so if we would consider potential quantitative applications afterwards we don't need to worry about the machine learning's difficulty to tackle evolution. The nature of the material coded is also stable as (social media comments) YouTube has maintained their comment format: 6 years ago they changed where the comment section is shown but not the format itself, so that's been stable.

- One possible idea for validation could be running a classifier (like DistilBERT or others) and see if we can identify things that also from manual coding that are also going on there but that are not the theme, but still account for variation, which might derail the classifier (prompting us to think of possible strategies to exclude that stuff; or oversampling variation, creating a training sample that is neutral towards that). Also within our validation exercise further we can take the 20 videos (which represent almost half of the video playlist) and run a hybrid content analysis (fast efficient way of checking assumptions: like the patterns that account for variation other than those related to the themes used as the reporting categories, and that there are no additional themes over this time that we're overlooking). We could do this by running a topic model, try to classify the topics found by the topic model towards the deductive coding scheme we already have. Here we'll notice: a) if there are things that are meaningful but that don't fit; b) we notice topics that occur together with our themes but which aren't our themes. And from the extracted patterns here by the topic model, it actually helps us with the question for the supervised "Are there any other patterns?". So we run the entire material like this, get the topics, then decide based on the classification of these topics if there are candidates for disturbing/false correlating patterns that we may need to eliminate somehow (by sampling it away; putting it in the training set, excluding information, etc.). Also helps us answer the question: "Are there additional things that we want to track?". If the answer is NO to these two questions, then we'll run our classifier and it should work fine. If the answer to any of these questions is YES, then we need to adjust, and then run the classifier. Also helps us uncover potential residual bias or any other issues in the training set.

- Some potential adjustments: intertwined themes (i.e. cultural-religious, etc.). If the topic model is capable of giving us themes (like one that is more political and one that is more religious), this would mean that the patterns are sufficiently distinct in our data after all that the machine can credibly distinguish them. If the topic model throws them together (which is likely) then we either have to live with the hybrid category we already have from the manual analysis (combining these notions together), or we have to see if we can artificially separate them (as the machine can handle it we think, as it's going for maximum cohesion). We have doubts about parsing some of the comments (like really short ones for instance) as to us, or any another potential human reader, it wouldn't make perhaps the same sense if read, but a machine can tolerate the idea that patterns often co-exist, so long as it has enough observations where they don't. So if we have in our data a bunch of text where we can tell this is purely "religious" or purely "political", we'll try to find some more of those and oversample them in the training set; then we might have a chance that the machine actually finds this.

The benefit of combining using inductive technology and deductive techniques is just to see if we're missing something, to check if the things that we know are all there is to know.

Scaling: Next, our previously established categories can be translated in a way that enables the computer to do (part of) the coding process exploring text collections that are beyond the capacity of a manual analysis (enriching but not replacing it fully, depending on the assumption that what we're looking for is structurally similar to what we already have, and that the things that make it structurally similar are indeed the relevant ones). Therefore next, we could apply a supervised machine learning technique (as we have categories that we already know are deductive, and theoretically meaningful). In summary for a potential design we could train the supervised machine learning on the 20 videos already manually analyzed and "validated" by the topic model, then we apply it to the remaining 17 videos in the Israeli-Palestinian videos playlist. After interpretation, if all is well, we might then extend the range of videos analyzed by the supervised machine learning to the entire library on Vice News YouTube channel

relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (~147 videos) (when searching key words). In all, we maintain the focus on only the top 33 thread comments in each of the videos.

Annex 3

Example quotes for Media Bias, Social Media and News Sources theme:

1. [BR>C]: Oh come on, give me a break. A little boy using stick to fight?? Have you ever experienced a fight with fundamental Islamists or what are you talking about? Here he is, Hamas leader telling left wing media Vice, I am such a good human, we are so peaceful, George Floyd would be Hamas member, we are so oppressed, when we attacked, they attacked back, please tell Biden that this is so unfair!

2. [NA]: This is the MOST honest, admirable documentary. Thank you VICE. Keep voicing out the truth!

3. [MJ]: It's propaganda that aimed at victimising terrorists that attack Israel. Vice is propaganda machine for Islamic countries, who doesn't know that. But if you think Israel will stop defending themselves coz of propagandas like this then you are in for a big suprised coz they won't stop.

4. [RG>C]: The same Vice news who calls Israel, Palestine? The same Vice that supports Hamas, a terrorist organization? Yeah I'm sure there is no bias in their "reporting of the news".

5. [R]: Vice is biased now... If you listen to other news you will see Israel warning Palestinian house owner before they land airstrikes.

Example quotes for Calls for Peace, Justice and Solutions theme:

1. [J>SP]: I was saying that blaming either side isn't the route to peace in the region. Rather, finding a solution that allows each group to prosper. It sure seems Palestinians moving to Jordan would make that more likely. Germany just made a large Green Hydrogen deal with Saudi Arabia. Jordan has similar potential to be a big player in a green energy economy, plus to restore farmland in their region through solar desalination. After a generation, Jordan could be just as much their home as Palestine was to their parents.

2. [MJ>TT]: Try Hamas for war crimes in the international court. Try Israeli government for war crimes in international court. The action of Hamas doesn't excuse the actions of Israeli government. "If those rockets were being fired into your neighbourhood you would demand they were destroyed even if it meant innocents would die". According to your logic, if the man in the video who lost his family wanted revenge and fired rockets at Israel and killed Israeli citizens, his reaction will be justified? Unknowingly you are literally explaining what Israel is doing. "If Israel wanted to kill civilians the death toll would be in the tens of thousands". Nice try to justify Israeli bombings. They killed 253 civilians, injured more than 3,000 and displaced 7,2000 people against 13 Israelis who were killed by Hamas. They literally killed like 23 times more people. You want more people to die? "It's not a nice fact but it's a fact of war". That is why we have rules of war and international courts to convict people for war crimes. Shooting on civilians is a war crime. It happened now. Try Hamas and Israel in international court for their war crimes. But what fuels the hatred even more is that Israel always gets away with it. They don't honor the UN resolutions, they have blockaded Gaza, they are snatching land from Palestinians and killing them. What do you expect from Palestinians? They fight they die, they don't fight they die either way and they don't get justice. Tell me that if Russians occupied your land and kicked you off of your home you won't fight back? If you kill innocent people they will fight back. In my eyes if the man who lost his whole family joins Hamas or fights against Israel, it will be completely justified, because he is not getting justice for him.

Annex 4

Example quotes of the Empathy, Emotional Perspectives on the Conflict and Complexity of Support theme:

1. [DS]: After losing almost all the family members, a severely injured person with broken ribs says: “God willing, we will rebuild our house and remain in our home”. I’ve understood the real meaning of “Resilience” today. Israeli atrocities are exceeding all the limits, I really wish I could do something for these Palestinian survivors, my prayers, and my respect for them.

2. [RD]: My heart kept sinking with every family member from the man that died. This is beyond inhumane.

3. [HC]: When I heard how much that man lost, I cried. War is a terrible thing. Especially for those not even involved (civilians).

4. [B]: I am by far someone who lets things bother me emotionally but this is heart breaking. I could and would never even begin to imagine this happening in my life, thoughts are with all the families of the innocent Palestinians. Love from the UK.

5. [ZK]: How is Israel apartheid state when Palestinians are not even Israeli citizens! You don’t even know what apartheid was, you just throw words around coz you so desperate to turn terrorists into victims...

6. [J.C.]: Yes. It leaves me almost speechless. & yet, I feel empathy. Their courage helps me face my troubles without complaining.

7. [TT]: There’s no way I could lose my family or even see this happen to people just like me. And not spend my life fight the enemy that made me.

8. [L.L.]: Yea long live Israel.

9. [SF>P]: Then stop supporting terrorists and stop attacking a smarter better country.

10. [A>P]: Hamas couldn’t thank to Israeli modern defence system or there would have been thousands of dead bodies on streets I am not on either side but just telling you as you said Hamas just killed less than 15 it’s bec of defence system.

11. [RJ]: Now, Hamas construction inc. will make millions reconstructing, while the innocent suffer!

12. [O>TK]: Pointing fingers will poke everyone’s eyes out. You have to understand it makes little to no sense, he was a civilian who was just living his life, you should be ashamed of your self to be honest. Yes hardliners on both sides created this and it should be condemned, the civilians on both sides pay the price. And I have Israeli friends so don’t give me no bs, bit you can not excuse bombing civilians it is wrong wrong wrong.

Annex 5

Example quotes of The Right to Exist and the Ethics of Conflict theme:

1. [D.L.>VN]: All of Gaza is controlled by Hamas. Israel wants nothing to do with Gaza. “Israel uses its rockets to protect its citizens. Hamas uses its citizens to protect their rockets”.

2. [KK]: Existence for them is resistance. The mere fact that they exist on their land, and continue to hold on proudly to their history and culture means that Israel’s control isn’t complete, their project for Palestine and it’s people is not complete.

3. [D.L.>L.M.]: Good questions posed for you. What would you do if your neighbor across the street sits down on the balcony, puts his little boy on his lap and starts shooting machine gun fire into your nursery in Israel? Question 2: What would you do if your neighbor across the street digs a tunnel from his nursery to your nursery in order to blow up your home or in order to kidnap your family? With these two questions I pass the interview to you.

4. [E>IA]: Makes sense ha? First the police arrests you then you commit a crime lolol interesting that the peaceful worshipers of Islam come to their pilgrimage site with home made weapons.

5. [M.B.]: What’s a Palestinian?

6. [J.M.]: Finally, we, Palestinians, are getting some attention, this isn’t war between two strong sides, this is Genocide!

7. [A.T.>T.Z.]: This is not genocide. How come that the Palestinian population is multiplying since 1948? It’s nowhere near genocide.

8. [I>KW]: Do you expect Israel to allow Palestinians to fire rockets at them and not retaliate?

9. [KJ]: How can they claim victimhood? As far back as Israeli-Palestinian fighting goes, the Palestinians/Arabs attack Israel, and play victim when Israel defends themselves.

10. [KC>KWI]: Expect that the side that is woefully out gunned to not openly attack then try to play the victim card. What a world it would be if people took ownership of their actions. It's almost like we would be able to find common ground.

11. [I>SS]: They weren't praying they were throwing rocks.

12. [GH>IA]: That doesn't justify killing innocents, like Israel has no justification for killing all this civilians in Gaza.

13. [VT]: Israel has EVERY right to defend itself.

14. [D1]: Palestine also has a right to defend itself.

15. [R>C]: Tear gas, stun grenades are not an act of war you can't just launch missiles for that especially from residential areas to residential areas.

16. [RG>D1]: Israel attacked first? How did you come to that conclusion? I wouldn't call 7 Palestinian families getting evicted LEGALLY for not paying rent an attack.

17. [RG>D1]: From what? 3 thousand rockets targeted at civilians? Using daycare centers and hospitals as human shields?

18. [AB>SM]: Yeah, rockets and intifadas are not slaps, my friend.

19. [MM>I]: Then find another homeland.

20. [I>MM]: If I told you to find another homeland would you accept it? No so don't tell other people that.

21. [SK>KC]: Would you give up your home? Land and freedom?

22. [LN>I]: Either U are wrong or very psychotic if u wanna defend Israel's unjust occupation and action the Hamas is still disgusting but Israel is far worse in their brutality.

23. [HD>CU]: Israel is the most careful when it comes to humans life. The attacks are very specific, on the other hand Hamas is aiming towards big population and main cities. Hams leaves Israel no choice.

24. [TA>I]: And you think that's reasonable response from the IDF, to storm a sacred site (almost destroying it), tossing grenades, using rubber bullets? What kind of reality are you in to make it seem like the oppressor is oppressed, disgusting.

25. [R]: You can't just blame one side. Both are wrong. Hamas shouldn't start with missiles even if they get angry.

26. [R]: If Hamas really consider the safety of their people they shouldn't attack Israel from domestic area. Hamas should not start a war they cannot win.

27. [M>AS]: Fair enough. So when an army sends rockets don't act surprised when the other army fires back.

28. [M>D1]: There isn't a state called Palestine. To defend, you need to be attacked first, not the case here.

29. [M>LN]: What occupation? Was there a state called Palestine that Israel invaded?!

30. [FC]: Look at this phone call between an IDF soldier and Palestinian⁶. Here's a transcript of the call: Palestinian: "I can't get all of the people out. I need at least two hours to get them out". IDF: "Listen, we are going to bomb the building". Palestinian: "You want to bomb? Bomb whatever you want". IDF: "No, brother, we need to do everything we can so you don't die". Palestinian: "We want to die". IDF: "But you have responsibility for children's lives". Palestinian: "If the children need to die then they'll die". IDF: "God forbid, God forbid what do you want to die?!". Palestinian: "This is how we reveal your cruelty". When is the last time you heard or saw an Israeli saying or doing that? Next, look at the actions of the PA. A lot of Palestinian casualties are the result of the fact that Israel fires only on military sites and arsenals, but Hamas tends to place these sites and arsenals near or in buildings like schools and hospitals as a mechanism of defense. It puts Israel in a no win situation—if Israel doesn't fire, that's another stash of potential weapons to be attacked by. If Israel does fire, there's the chance that they might kill civilians and at the very least incriminate themselves by shooting at infrastructure⁷. Israel sent pamphlets and phone warnings to

⁶ <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=bjyqH3m9UGw>.

⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/07/31/why-hamas-stores-its-weapons-inside-hospitals-mosques-and-schools/?outputType=amp>; <https://amp.theatlantic.com/amp/article/380149/>; <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2753176/amp/Hamas-DID-use-schools-hospitals-Gaza-Strip-human-shields-launch-rocket-attacks-Israel-admits-says-mistake.html>.

Gaza before air strikes back in 2014 and they have continued that practice pretty consistently⁸. Here's an IDF phone call on camera⁹. Wikipedia has some info on the practice of roof knocking, or sending a non-damaging warning before firing for real. It's designed to help people evacuate¹⁰. What's more, Hamas actually tells people to ignore the IDF warnings about air strikes and bombings. Therefore a lot of the casualties are not just Hamas's fault on the count that they put military sites in or near hospitals and schools, but also on the count that they intentionally prevent people from getting to safety after warnings are issued. "In most cases, prior to the attacks, residents have been warned to leave, either via phone calls by the Israel military or by the firing of warning missiles". But the Hamas-run Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Interior has told residents not to pay attention to the IDF warnings"¹¹. Even more than that, the blockades on Gaza were instated after Hamas aggression took hold—and Hamas was well aware of the destruction their actions would cause. Only they didn't care because they will do anything to incriminate Israel by blaming it for starving their (Palestinian) people when in reality they were the ones who started the whole fiasco¹². According to idolnetworth, Khaled Mashal's net worth is about 2.6 Billion. Netanyahu's NW is 11 Million. Israel's GDP is about 400 B and Gaza's GDP is 10 B. Mashal's net worth is 200 times higher than Netanyahu's while his government makes about 40 times less money. Where is all that foreign aid going? Not to the people or institutions that need it. Not to the Palestinian civilians. Not to the innocents caught in the crossfire.

31. [TS>I]: They throw rocks and u throw tear gas and bullets wowwww.

32. [RG>KW]: Umm false. I don't know of any worship center that just so happens to have a stockpile of fireworks, Molotov cocktails and rocks to throw at the police. They were there to, what does the left call it? Have a mostly "peaceful protest"?

33. [I>AS]: Not really. Israel isn't the one calling for the death of every Muslim, Israel isn't the one using its civilians as human shields, Israel isn't the one firing 4k rockets at civilians.

Annex 6

Example quotes of the Historical Context, Religious Perspectives, Politico-Cultural Interpretations and Comparisons theme:

1. [DS]: That's religion for you! [JI]: People need a reason to hate each other like religion, race, nationality, etc.

2. [U>MF]: It's as much a democracy as South Africa was under apartheid.

3. [AS]: Israel, the EU and USA believe militants is a terrorist organisation. The rest of the world, over 200 countries do not. They are not terrorists, they are a resistance army, and as legitimate as any other army in the world, get over it.

4. [MJ>AS]: Just like the entire western world believed Nelson Mandela was a terrorist. Even 20 years after South Africa was liberated. Don't care what they say or label. When has the oppressed ever had the power to fight against the oppressor? They will always be looked at as wrong from these countries. My moral compass isn't based on what America Israel and colonial west says lol. Listen to the people. They know the truth.

5. [MF>U]: Haha ya, be a Arab women in Gaza wearing jeans or a gay man and tell me who is the democracy.

6. [MF]: Blame them (the Arabs), don't blame the only democracy in the Middle East. [N>MF]: The only democracy in Middle East is Cyprus not Israel.

7. [IH>U]: For Hamas it's not mainly religion. It's rather the land problem. For the Israelis it's religious problem.

8. [MM>M]: God first made the promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21): On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—the land of the Kenites,

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/09/world/middleeast/by-phone-and-leaflet-israeli-attackers-warn-gazans.amp.html>.

⁹ <https://youtu.be/sumq8ktYOTI>.

¹⁰ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roof_knocking.

¹¹ <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-hamas-civilians-human-shields>.

¹² https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockade_of_the_Gaza_Strip.

Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites". There were the last there. Aliens. Liar.

9. [M>MM]: Yes, and then God said He will establish a nation in the land of the Canaanites thru Abraham. Those who will bless it will be blessed, those who will curse it will be cursed. Do you wonder why all the anti-Semite Muslim countries/regions are so far behind in pretty much everything?

10. [OP>DL]: It is "occupied" territory, all the inhabitants are Palestinian Muslims. [DL>OP]: That means that Jordan is Palestine since the majority of the citizens in Jordan are Palestinians.

11. [JZ>AR]: I agree. The United Nations created Israel and Palestine, two separate countries. Then within a week Palestinians and other Arab Nations attack Israel and lost, and several Wars later, they kept on losing like the losers that they are, and the lost land and all they did was whine and cry about it ever since. So yes, you are correct in a way. The UN adopted the partition plan in 1947, and Palestine and the Arabs attacked Israel and lost, boohoo. Tough luck for you guys. But whatever, keep the victim mentality alive.

12. [W.I.]: We Muslims stay strong in our faith and he knows he will meet them in paradise. This world is not very just to everyone.

13. [KW>RG]: With that mentality then the African Americans fighting against slavery and discrimination are wrong, those in South Africa are wrong everyone in the whole world is wrong and shouldn't be playing the victim card right.

14. [KW>RG]: It's a comparison about how you were talking about them fighting back and then deserving it. The slaves fought back, but does them fighting back make them less of a victim? Excuse me did the Israelis not come after the war and after everyone didn't have space for them? the Israelis started increasing their settlements in areas which did not belong to them. They wanna expand and take over, so what's the point of a two state solution? Hamas is not a good organisation but I don't see any other country doing anything to help protect the Palestinians. No you just see the US signing a new arms deal with Israel. It seems you don't care about the civilians dying in Palestine cause they deserved it right? Hamas represents all Palestinians same way KKK represents all white Americans? A 5-month old baby is the only one that is survived after his mother, father and siblings have been killed. But he deserves it right? He doesn't need your sympathy "BLAME HAMAS".

15. [RG>KW]: Where do you think the Palestinians got the 3 thousand rockets they shot into Israel? I'll give you a hint it rhymes with Iran. Also the arms treaties with the US are purely defensive. They can not use the Iron Dome missile defense system offensively. It's a shame the Palestinians shot so many rockets from hospitals, schools and mosques and did so little damage to Israel. Israelis were promised what is now Israel AND Jordan from the British. Britain felt pressured by Muslims cut the territory in half and gave the other half to Israel. The last time Israel expanded its territory was during the 6-day war. Israel IMMEDIATELY gave that territory back to Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

16. [KW>RG]: You think we don't know that Iran supplies Hamas, but doesn't America supply Israel? That why they are so confident to do anything. The Israeli government has committed over 20 human rights violations but no one wants to speak cause the west loves them. So it's ok to be a tyrant if you're on the side of the west, lol jumped killed Gaddafi, Saddam for them being tyrants but fund one yourself. Irony wow. Honestly there's no point of arguing any more I can already sense you have no sympathy towards the Palestinians since you already have made a conclusion in your mind. Seeing as your African American do you feel some type of way against America for their discrimination against blacks, or their policing and criminal system or is that also black people playing a victim card? They should forget about the 400 years of slave and atrocities right, and accept their fate right?

17. [RG>AD]: You are incorrect Israel gave up land for the Palestinians. The Palestinians responded with the three no's. No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations.

18. [RE]: When you keep voting Democrat, you expect more disfunction. When you keep voting Hamas, expect more retaliatory bombings.

19. [AF>AD]: Electing a terrorist group... not the best reaction.

20. [I>AS]: That's 35 countries consider the Hamas military to be terrorists. Terror is their main strategy. In the name of their nameless god.

21. [T.Z>J.M]: For me, the most disgusting thing is that Israel uses the same/very similar methods to what Germans did when they invaded my country. My own family had their home taken away and given to German settlers while my family was put in forced labour camp. Behavior like this is undefendable in my eyes. Free Palestine.

22. [S.D.]: Well so I am not from this area, and I predict that there's more to the story than everybody is telling but from what it sounds like, if Gaza would stop launching bombs against Israel things like this would not happen in the first place. If Gaza is starting the war they get no sympathy and it's their fault. But maybe there's more to the story than I know about so please comment everybody!

23. [Z>D]: That's because we as Muslims believe that this life is a test and it's not meant to be easy and we believe that you will be rewarded on every hardship or illness you went through even if it was a prick of a thorn and it will make your sins forgiven as the prophet Muhammed peace be upon him said "No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that" (Sahih al-Bukhari 5641, 5642). Also, we believe that God tests only those whom He loves, so it's not because God hates you but it's completely the opposite: the prophet Muhammed peace be upon him said. "If Allah wills good for someone, He afflicts him with trials" (Source: Sahih al-Bukhari 5321).

24. [JC>JZ]: If your grandfather was convicted of murdering someone out of nowhere, you wouldn't be held respond for your grandfather's crime. You as a individual would've had nothing to do with his actions and to claim that his actions was your fault and that you should be punished and thrown into prison would be completely stupid. In the same way, you can't blame the current generation of Palestinians for the unprovoked hostility of their grandfathers and great grandfathers in 1947. The current generation of Palestinians in the current world had nothing to do with the decision making of the Palestinian and Arab leadership in 1947. They didn't order the attacks, they didn't start the war. Most of the Palestinians of the current generation didn't even exist in 1947 and the handful of currently living Palestinians who did were babies, toddlers and children at the time. The only way you can justify the crimes against humanity committed against the Palestinians such as gradual ethnic and cultural cleansing is by using this highly flawed 'collective blame argument' that acts as if all the Palestinian both of past and present were the same single person and that the act of one Palestinian or a handful of Palestinians or a group of past Palestinians who aren't even alive today was the act of every single Palestinian alive, simply by virtue of being under the label of 'Palestinian'. When the collective blame argument is actually deconstructed, anybody can see that you don't actually have a valid argument or point and that you're simply following a dogmatic nationalistic belief with no substance or ethical validity.

25. [VO>P]: My friend I suggest to read more about this situation, before commenting. This is not a competition who lost more civilian life. Hamas gets his money monthly from Qatar in millions of. Instead of building schools, hospitals they arm themselves. Instead of creating military zones they put missiles launchers within civilian. In the first day of fighting few rockets that been fired by Hamas fell inside Gaza and killed whole family. About West Bank Arabs over there live under Abu Mazen, he have full control over the territory and he have full support of Israel government. Before writing wrong statements just Google it.

26. [E>A]: I didn't know people who believe in medieval religions think that way.

27. [SC>MF]: Yes a democracy that rejected a human rights group's request to declare it unlawful to shoot at unarmed civilians. You can't pick and choose what parts of democracy it's good at and which parts it absolutely acts like an abusive authoritarian state.

28. [AI>MF]: Democracy doesn't necessarily mean freedom for everyone, democracy means freedom of the majority of the people to elect someone to represent them. If the majority wanted Sharia Law, then that's democracy, even if the majority wanted

a monarchy to rule them, it's still democracy.

29. [S5]: You think there's a god after watching this?

30. [DY>S5]: If there is god... well then seems like he doesn't care about Gaza.

31. [SC>U]: It was never a religious war. It's an abuse of power over land. Israel has attacked Christian churches and Islamic mosques; You can't claim it to be a religious war when it clearly isn't.

32. [AS]: You will see all loved ones again after this life in Heaven don't be too sad. They will be waiting once you pass from this life into the next and you can spend all eternity with them, as Heaven is the most beautiful place with an infinite amount of things to do with no suffering, no illness and no evil.

33. [MJ>ZK]: How is Israel apartheid state when Palestinians are not even Israeli citizens! You don't even know what apartheid was, you just throw words around coz you so desperate to turn terrorists into victims...

34. [DY>MJ]: As an Israeli myself I can't agree more with that. But seems that Vice might not see this way...

35. [M]: When you take the initiative to use lethal force you are not a victim, you are an aggressor. If Canada or Mexico would have sent thousands of rockets into US we would carpet bomb them. It's sad that innocent Palestinians died, I wish the "reporter" had asked the Hamas top dog why they fired rockets from civilian areas, and really, why did they fire rockets in the first place?

36. [M>IA]: They gave independence to Gaza and look how it turned out...

37. [I>GN]: If they were able to get rid of their terrorist rulers it wouldn't be an open air prison anymore. Have you ever wondered why Egypt is also refusing to open Gaza?

Annex 7

Example quotes of the Settlements theme:

1. [SD>EZ]: So evictions and settlements deserve missile fire? Even if you were right about the evictions and settlements, which you're not, what about the concept of the punishment fitting the crime?

2. [IB]: Stop building settlements, stop electing criminals and maybe there would be peace. Oh, and stop spreading propaganda.

3. [GT]: This is the problem in Israel and Palestine. for both sides it's all or nothing, and someone 'has to' leave, or else people get hurt. Of course the Israeli government also plays a role in this for perpetuating these attitudes and for encouraging settlements in the west bank but revenge shouldn't be where you're going. You either are to live together or not live at all.

4. [TW>C]: Like natives stole land from other natives. The land belongs to the Israelites or could back further claimed by a tribe.